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EDUCATION: WHERE THE STAKES ARE AS HIGH AS CHILDREN CAN DREAM

CONGRESSMAN BOB CLEMENT*

I. INTRODUCTION

Prior to being elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1988, I served as president of Cumberland University in Lebanon, Tennessee. Cumberland University has a rich tradition of producing community leaders and public officials of national stature, including ninety-seven members of the U.S. House of Representatives, fifteen governors, and notable figures such as former Secretary of State Cordell Hull, former Senator Albert Gore, Sr.—the father of our Vice President—and my father, Governor Frank G. Clement.¹

Whatever one's occupation, everyone can be a good citizen. Our mission at Cumberland was to prepare students to live as responsible adults, equip them with the tools needed to make a living and a positive contribution to the economy, and instill in them a sense of respect for family and community.

My tenure at Cumberland provided me with invaluable professional experience in the field of education. But it is as a parent that I have developed a very personal appreciation for the value and significance of education. My wife, Mary, and I have two teenage daughters who attend public school. We have sought to instill in them the notion that through the acquisition of knowledge anything can be achieved. We strive to provide them with support at home, but there is no doubt that their school experience profoundly impacts their learning process.

My professional background in education and my experience as a parent have led me to conclude that education is our country's top domestic priority. I firmly believe that education is the key to solving most of the problems that confront our nation. Properly educated children receive the tools needed to become good citizens who make a positive contribution to our economy and to

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1. Governor Frank G. Clement served as Governor of Tennessee from 1953 to 1959 and from 1963 to 1967.

our society. Every child deserves a legitimate opportunity to learn, and thus, a genuine opportunity to succeed in life.

My personal experience and heartfelt belief in education's merits have influenced me to focus much of my time and energy on education issues in Congress. As a member of Congress, I have consistently voted for increased funding for Head Start, a program that gives low-income preschool children a leg-up on learning. I have sought to put more computers, modern textbooks, and nutritional lunches in our nation's schools. I have pushed for increasing the availability of Pell Grants, employer-provided scholarships, and other financial assistance programs to increase deserving kids' access to college.

In order to further enhance meaningful discussion in Congress on education issues, I co-founded the Education Caucus (EC) in 1997. The purpose of the Caucus is to bring together other members of the House of Representatives with backgrounds in education in order to provide a forum for dialogue and policy formation on education-related issues. The EC includes forty-six school administrators, teachers, and professors who currently serve in Congress. The balanced distribution of Democratic and Republican membership in the Caucus has made the EC a valuable, bipartisan tool. Co-chaired by Representative Roy Blunt (R-MO), the EC has hosted five formal meetings, which have featured guest speakers ranging from Education Secretary Richard Riley to Dr. Robert C. Andringa, President of the Coalition of Christian Colleges and Universities. My participation in the Education Caucus has helped me pinpoint the primary shortcomings in public education today.

Most people would agree that education is a means to financial independence. Ironically, today's education system often works against those in most need of its benefits—low-income and at-risk youth. Access to quality education should transcend all socio-economic levels.

Too many schools are failing their students, even in basic academic areas such as reading comprehension, writing, and mathematics.² Today's students must do more than just master the basics; they must learn technology-oriented skills to compete in the economic marketplace of the new millennium.

Children need teachers who are nurturing role models, proficient in their areas of instruction, and skillful in communicating information to their students. Unfortunately, too many educators today are simply not qualified to teach. Low salaries and bureaucracy deter some of our most capable citizens from entering the teaching profession.³ With impending teacher shortages due

2. Rene Sanchez, *Student Math Scores Improve, But 'Have a Long Way to Go,'* WASH. POST, Feb. 28, 1997, at A2; Rene Sanchez, *U.S. High School Seniors Rank Near Bottom; Europeans Score Higher in Math, Science Test*, WASH. POST, Feb. 25, 1998, at A1.

3. Tamara Henry, *Teacher Pay Just Outpaces Inflation; Average 3% Hike Disappoints NEA*, USA TODAY, Feb. 20, 1997, at D2; Jeffrey R. Wells, *Blackboard Bungle; If We Want Good Teachers, We Need Better Hiring Practices*, WASH. POST, Sep. 2, 1990, at B1.

to retirements and increasing student enrollment, the need to recruit more quality teachers is greater than ever.

Many classrooms in America are often too disruptive to promote proper learning. Schools must have the flexibility to discipline students who interfere with the education process. Children need to be effectively disciplined for breaking rules and rewarded for commendable behavior.

Safe and drug-free schools are increasingly the exception rather than the norm.⁴ We cannot expect our children to reach their potential when drugs and violence pose a constant threat.

Time and nature have ravaged school buildings. Some students are confronted with exposure to hazards such as asbestos and live electrical wires.⁵ Children have a right to learn in structurally sound, climate-controlled classrooms.

Schools must place more emphasis on character and basic values.⁶ In today's classrooms, "morality" and "honor" lack the intrinsic value they once possessed. Children should leave school equipped with the strength of character required to not only succeed in life, but also to make the world a better place for others.

To many Americans, solving these problems appears implausible. Secretary of Education Richard Riley recently pointed out that sixty-two percent of parents fear that the American education system will get worse instead of better.⁷ I believe that people feel this way because they see more rhetoric than action in the battle to improve education. Real change requires bold action. Government officials, educators, and parents must make a coordinated commitment to fundamental change.

In making our education system as good as it can be, America should embrace these essential goals: universal access to a quality education; a curriculum that prepares students for the future; well-qualified teachers; effective disciplinary standards; safe and drug-free schools; completed construction and restoration projects; and the promotion of character-building initiatives. Let us intensify our commitment to children.

II. UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO A QUALITY EDUCATION

More than ever before, America's prosperity hinges on education and training. Yet for many children, the biggest obstacle lies in gaining access to

4. Pierre Thomas, *Teens Use More Drugs, Worry Less About Consequences*, WASH. POST, December 16, 1995, at A1.

5. Alice Digilio, *Asbestos Removal Proves Costly; Schools Find Costs Rise as Demand for Specialized Work Grows*, WASH. POST WEEKLY (VIRGINIA), July 28, 1988, at 14.

6. *Should Morals be Taught in the Classroom*, NEA TODAY, May 1, 1997, at 43.

7. Secretary of Education, Richard Riley, Address at *New Democrat Coalition Meeting* (January 27, 1998).

classrooms that encourage and facilitate learning. This hindrance is pervasive throughout the entire educational spectrum, from preschool through college.

Early education is the key to long-term academic success. Early learning is a natural result of observing and processing one's surroundings. Even before birth, neurons develop and enable the brain "to communicate and function together in a coordinated way."⁸ Brain structure relies heavily on the nature of early experiences, which is why early education is crucial to maximizing young people's intellectual potential.⁹ Four years ago, the Carnegie Task Force on Learning in the Primary Grades, comprised of business and political leaders, scientists, educators, and other authorities, determined that our nation must "focus its attention and resources on the education of American children during the crucial age span of three to ten."¹⁰ A commitment to early learning is not merely a useful investment; it is absolutely critical to the fulfillment of long-term academic potential.

In promoting early education, President Clinton called for the hiring of 100,000 new teachers in his Fiscal Year 1999 budget, thereby creating smaller classes to facilitate learning in the primary grades.¹¹ According to the National Association of School Psychologists, existing research supports the benefits of intensive early childhood education and small class size in the primary grades.¹² When teachers can offer more personal attention to their students, the quality of the students' education improves.

Tax incentives are an effective way to encourage parents to invest in their children's schooling. Near the close of last year's session of Congress, the House passed the Education Savings Act for Public and Private Schools (H.R. 2646) by a 230-198 vote.¹³ This bill would encourage parents to contribute up to \$2,500 each year to education savings accounts.¹⁴ All taxes on the interest earned by these accounts would be waived if the funds are applied toward educational expenses, including tuition, fees, books, supplies, or home computers.¹⁵ As all students enrolled in grades K-12 could be assisted by this measure, H.R. 2646 is one example of how the federal government can improve children's access to education.¹⁶

8. *Starting Smart: How Early Experiences Affect Brain Development*, An Ounce of Prevention Fund Paper, Illinois, 1996.

9. *Id.*

10. *Universal Preschool Urged by Task Force*, School Board News, Oct. 1, 1996, at 6.

11. Andrew Taylor, *Key Clinton Proposals*, CONG. Q., Jan. 31, 1998, at 229.

12. Christine Russell, *Early Help Improves Learning Ability; Study Finds Long-Term Benefits in Educational Programs for Very Young Children*, WASH. POST, Feb. 13, 1996, at Z07.

13. 143 CONG. REC. H9056-02, H9075 (1997).

14. H.R. 2646, 105TH Cong., 1st Sess. (1997).

15. *Id.*

16. *Id.*

Primary and secondary education prepares children for higher education, which sets them on a clear path for economic success. A study of 1992 wage-earners reveals the link between academic progress and personal income. The following figures depict the mean annual earnings for individuals over seventeen, by their level of education:¹⁷

Professional = \$74,560	Doctorate = \$54,904
Master's = \$40,368	Bachelor's = \$32,629
Associate = \$24,398	Some college, no degree = \$19,666
High school graduate = \$18,737	Not a high school graduate = \$12,809

Few people would refute this causal relationship between higher educational attainment and earning power. But the stark difference in the above numbers suggests that a quality education must not be denied to individuals unless we are willing to accept the consequences of an uneducated underclass.

Last year, Congress passed the Taxpayer Relief Act (H.R. 2014), concluding a successful bipartisan effort to make higher education more accessible.¹⁸ In the area of financial aid, this legislation enacted numerous reforms, including the following: up to \$1,500 in tax credits for each of the first two years of college, and up to \$2,000 in tax credits for each of the third and fourth years;¹⁹ tax-free treatment of state-run prepaid tuition plans;²⁰ permitted up to \$500 per-child contributions each year for investment in education individual retirement accounts (IRAs);²¹ and penalty-free withdrawals from retirement IRAs each year to pay for qualified higher education expenses.²²

The 105th Congress is considering the Affordable Higher Education-Through-Pell Grants Act of 1997 (H.R. 744), which would raise the maximum Pell Grant level to \$5,000.²³ Targeting those who have the greatest financial need, Pell Grants provide funds for higher education to those who might not otherwise have matriculated.²⁴ Students must be made aware of these and other scholarships that may abet them in pursuing a quality education. Every child desiring access to education should know their options for local, state, and federal assistance.

17. *Statistical Brief*, U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration, Bureau of the Census, Aug. 1994.

18. Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997, Pub. L. No. 105-34, 111 Stat. 788 (1997) (enacted H.R. 2014, 105th Cong., 1st Sess.).

19. *Id.* at § 201.

20. *Id.* at § 211.

21. *Id.* at § 213.

22. *Id.* at § 203.

23. H.R. 744, 105th Cong., 1st Sess. (1997).

24. *See* Grants To Students In Attendance At Institutions Of Higher Education, 20 U.S.C. § 1070a (1997).

Congress and the President have worked together to support programs operating successfully at the local level. One such program, TRIO, has enjoyed broad-based support in both Washington and local communities since 1965. Serving approximately 700,000 students, TRIO assists individuals who possess both ability and motivation, but who would be otherwise unlikely to earn a college degree.²⁵ TRIO programs assist families with incomes below 150 percent of the poverty level, where neither parent graduated from college.²⁶ After receiving almost \$529 million during Fiscal Year 1998 (FY 98),²⁷ TRIO was awarded \$53 million more in the President's FY 99 budget.²⁸ Unfortunately, such an investment permits barely five percent of all eligible young people to participate in this program. The needs of TRIO and other similar groups are still enormous. But this local-federal partnership has been a successful model for cultivating hope and opportunity among at-risk youths.

Children deserve universal access to a quality education. True economic freedom arises when money is no longer a factor in determining intellectual growth. A good job should be more closely attributed to one's academic performance, not to one's financial fortune. Our nation's policies should continue to clear paths for individuals to achieve success on their own.

III. A CURRICULUM THAT PREPARES STUDENTS

Universal access to education means little if school curricula do not prepare students adequately for the future. While serving as former President Ronald Reagan's Secretary of Labor, Ann McLaughlin commented that 700,000 children would "graduate from high school [in 1988] unable to read their diplomas."²⁹ Reading, writing, and arithmetic comprise the basic tenets of our education system.³⁰ We must not fail our children in these fundamental areas of study. But if Americans are to compete effectively in the world economy of the next millennium, then technology must become a core requirement in every classroom.

25. See Testimony of Dr. Arnold L. Mitchem Before the Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Committee on Appropriations, FED. DOCUMENT CLEARING HOUSE CONG. TESTIMONY, Feb. 4, 1998, also available in 1998 WL 47000.

26. 20 U.S.C. § 1070a (1997).

27. *Supra* note 24.

28. Richard W. Riley, Year 1999 Budget Request for the Department of Education, Prepared Statement of Richard W. Riley, Secretary of Education, Before the Senate Appropriations Committee Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Subcommittee, FED. NEWS SERVICE, Feb. 4, 1998.

29. Irving B. Harris, *CHILDREN IN JEOPARDY: CAN WE BREAK THE CYCLE OF POVERTY* 42 (Yale University Press, New Haven 1996).

30. See Kelly Barron and Ann Marsh, *The Skills Gap*, FORBES, Feb. 23, 1998, at 44; Jay Mathews, *State To Phase Out Old Literacy Test; More Difficult Exam To Replace 20-Year-Old Measure Of Basic Skills*, WASH. POST, Dec. 17, 1997, at B8; Heidi Juersivich, *Tax Raise Favored For School Tech Training*, USA TODAY, June 30, 1997, at D7.

Literacy is crucial to the development and success of any community. Whether working at a job or paying bills at home, reading is a prerequisite in life. Everyone can play a role in assisting schools' responsibility to teach reading. Last year, the House of Representatives acknowledged the importance of literacy by passing H.R. 2614, the Reading Excellence Act.³¹ This bill authorized \$780 million over the next three years to improve students' reading skills and to train reading teachers.³² Parents also play an essential role in their children's development, as studies have shown a positive relationship between parents' educational attainment and their children's participation rates in literacy activities.³³

Mathematics is also a core requirement for a complete education. One can learn much about our education system by comparing it with that of other nations. In 1996, the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS)—perhaps the most extensive study of education ever performed—compared the education systems of more than 40 nations.³⁴ Among its many insightful results, TIMSS concluded that Japan's and Germany's mathematics curricula are more advanced than that of the United States, even though U.S. students "spend considerably more hours per year in mathematics classes than their Japanese and German counterparts."³⁵ When 50 percent of public school students in a recent study acknowledge that their schools fail to challenge them,³⁶ there is little reason to question TIMSS' validity. The fact is, America's schools will not meet our children's needs unless they make a commitment to requiring higher standards of learning.

An essential facet of a complete education is incorporating computers into every curriculum. The United States is evolving technologically at exponential rates every year. At least 50 percent of America's workforce interact with computers at their jobs.³⁷ President Clinton, an outspoken advocate for technology in the schools, clearly understands the importance of educating young people in a field increasingly applicable to daily life. This past January, his Administration proposed a \$28 million plan that would "retrain American workers, create a national job bank for computer-related openings and launch a

31. H.R. 2614, 105th Cong., 1st Sess. (1997).

32. *Id.*

33. NAT'L CENTER FOR EDUC. STAT., U.S. DEPT. OF EDUC., THE CONDITION OF EDUC. 1997, INDICATOR 2: EARLY LITERACY ACTIVITIES IN THE HOME (1997).

34. NAT'L CENTER FOR EDUC. STAT., U.S. DEPT. OF EDUC., PURSUING EXCELLENCE INITIAL FINDINGS FROM THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE STUDY (TIMSS) SYNTHESIS REPORT, preface and 1 (1996).

35. *Id.*, Ch.2, at 4.

36. EDUCATION BYTES, OUTLOOK (Ombudsman Educ. Services, Winter 1998).

37. Kelly. H. Carnes, Building The 21st Century Workforce: The Challenge of Technological Change, Remarks of Kelly H. Carnes, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Technology Policy U.S. Dept. Of Commerce Before the Independent Schools Associations of the Central States (Apr. 11, 1997), in DEP'T. COMMERCE BULL., at 3.

public relations effort aimed at convincing children that computer careers are cool.”³⁸ Meanwhile, my home state of Tennessee recently achieved its goal of enabling every public school to connect to the Internet, thereby permitting any child to learn more about computers during the school day.³⁹ Schools must empower children by giving them the tools needed to meet the rising demand for a computer-literate workforce.

I am also a staunch supporter of educating children in the arts. My daughters, for example, have enjoyed playing the violin and piano for several years, which has shown me how music adds a new dimension to young people. Many people agree that music education provides our youth with cultural benefits. But music also uniquely enhances one’s performance skills,⁴⁰ offering credence to the notion that art enriches academic ability.⁴¹ I firmly believe that arts education is as important as any other course of study.

There are numerous innovative programs throughout the country that promote school curricula. Last year’s Labor/Health and Human Services/Education appropriations bill (H.R. 2264), which became law on November 13, included a \$5.5 million appropriation—a \$1 million increase from the previous year—to the highly effective “We the People . . . Project Citizen” civic education program.⁴² “We the People . . .” encourages civic competence and responsibility by thoroughly teaching 5th-12th graders about the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.⁴³ A national academic competition follows a six-week standard curriculum on these issues.⁴⁴ The result is a more civic-minded student body with a greater understanding and appreciation for our nation’s history.

Children deserve a school curriculum that provides intellectual stimulation and prepares them for a financially independent life. One cannot afford to disregard schools that award diplomas worth less than the paper on which they are printed. Classrooms should combine core areas of study with life-enhancing electives that broaden students’ perspectives and help them succeed outside the classroom.

38. Lori Nitschke, *Critics Say High-Tech Training Plan May Not Get the Job Done*, CONG. Q., Jan. 17, 1998, at 131.

39. Dorren Klausnitzer, *All State Schools Net Accessible*, THE TENNESSEAN, Nov. 11, 1997, at A1.

40. THE REP. OF THE NAT’L COMM’N ON MUSIC EDUC., GROWING UP COMPLETE: THE IMPARATIVE FOR MUSIC EDUCATION 21 (Mar. 1991).

41. *Id.*

42. Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations Act, Pub. L. No. 105-78, 111 Stat. 1467 (1997) (enacted H.R. 2264, 105th Cong., 1st Sess.).

43. See Suellen Reed, *Project Citizen*, THE INDIANAPOLIS STAR, Oct. 5, 1997, at D4; Bill Brooks, *We The People*, THE INDIANAPOLIS STAR, Oct. 9, 1997, at A15; *Centennial Kids Top Problem-Solvers*, ARIZ. REPUBLIC, Sept. 4, 1997, at EV6.

44. See Taylor, *supra* note 15.

IV. WELL-QUALIFIED TEACHERS

Well-trained and dedicated teaching professionals hold the key to communicating curricula effectively. Likewise, ill-trained and apathetic educators adversely affect the learning and growth capabilities of children. Although these concepts appear to be common sense, the National Commission on Teaching and America's future has reported that 25 percent of all teachers are unqualified.⁴⁵ America should not settle for teachers who cannot effectively teach.

Some schools are hiring teachers who lack advanced academic credentials in their assigned subject matter. One of my colleagues, Representative George Miller (D-CA), points out that 23 percent of secondary teachers "do not have even a college minor in their main teaching field."⁴⁶ He has introduced legislation (H.R. 2228) that would require each state to meet specified conditions for ensuring a qualified teacher in every classroom.⁴⁷ A second-rate teaching force will not yield a first-rate education system.

Some members of Congress recognize the value of continuing education programs for teachers, especially in the area of technology training. Representative Constance Morella (R-MD) introduced H.R. 1572, which would require schools to promote technology training for teachers, as well as to focus more on ways to incorporate technology in the classroom.⁴⁸ H.R. 2131, sponsored by Representative Robert A. Weygand (D-RI), aims to reserve at least 20 percent of local school technology resources for technology training of teachers.⁴⁹ If students are to learn about technology, then their teachers must be both proficient in this area of study and capable of consistently upgrading their knowledge.

The city of Baltimore, Maryland will soon adopt an innovative policy that would make teachers more accountable for their students' scholastic achievement. This plan will require the school district to grade its educators based on their performances.⁵⁰ Teachers who excel in certain areas, ranging from lesson preparation to student achievement, will earn rewards which include attending educational conferences or serving as mentors, while teachers who fail to live up to pre-set goals could be fired by the school district.⁵¹ Policies which would hold educators to higher standards must be continually monitored and re-evaluated. Specifically, judging teachers based on student performance could

45. See Richard Whitmire, *House Looking at How To Purchase Better Teachers*, GANNET NEWS SERVICE, Mar. 17, 1998; Linda Darling-Hammond, *What Matters Most: A Competent Teacher For Every Child*, PHI DELTA KAPPAN, Nov. 1996, at 193.

46. *Id.*

47. H.R. 2228, 105th Cong., 1st Sess. (1997).

48. H.R. 1572, 105th Cong., 1st Sess. (1997).

49. H.R. 2131, 105th Cong., 1st Sess. (1997).

50. *Baltimore to Grade Educators*, AM. SCH. BD. J., Feb. 1998, at 9.

51. *Id.*

encourage grade inflation, which 73 percent of respondents in a recent poll believe is increasingly becoming the norm at schools.⁵²

In order to satisfy the demands of a rising student population and impending faculty retirements, the U.S. may need to hire as many as two million teachers over the next ten years.⁵³ In addition, 30 percent of the new teachers in any given year will quit within five years.⁵⁴ If we also crack down on the estimated 25 percent of educators who may not be qualified to teach,⁵⁵ then the United States is heading toward a crisis. Unless schools can attract more qualified individuals to the teaching profession, larger class sizes and fewer course options will result.

Teachers are not solely to blame for poorly educated students. At times, scarce resources may prevent teachers from meeting every child's needs. Perhaps the acquisition of more teaching assistants would help teachers move their class forward with fewer distractions. Schools could take advantage of unpaid internships, whereupon graduate students could receive academic credit by helping academically challenged students keep up with the rest of the class. The 1996 TIMSS study reported that U.S. teachers usually spend less than three months in student teaching during their college training.⁵⁶ Longer periods of student teaching time would not only help schools meet the needs of their students but also better prepare future teachers for entering the profession.

Children deserve teachers who are proficient in the courses they teach, as well as skillful in communicating this information to their students. Talented educators should be revered, for they are a child's link between ignorance and knowledge.

V. EFFECTIVE DISCIPLINARY STANDARDS

Even the most qualified teachers in the country are challenged by students who are disruptive or unwilling to learn. In a national bipartisan survey commissioned this year by the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association, the public determined that undisciplined and disruptive students are the biggest problems facing schools.⁵⁷ But it is difficult to find consensus on how students should be disciplined for improper behavior on school grounds. Some members of Congress have voiced their opposition to corporal punishment. During the 104th Congress, Representative Major Owens (D-NY) introduced a bill (H.R. 2918) that did not come to the House floor

52. *You say: Grade inflation is on the rise*, AM. SCH. BD. J., Feb. 1998, at 56.

53. *Report Raises Concerns about Teacher Training*, SCH. REFORM NEWS, Oct. 1997, at 7.

54. *Id.*

55. *See supra* note 46.

56. U.S. DEPT OF ED., PURSUING EXCELLENCE, Ch. 4, at 4 (1996).

57. A National Bipartisan Survey on School Modernization, Greenberg Quinlan Research and the Tarrance Group, 1998, at 1, 2.

for a vote, but which would have denied federal funds to educational programs or entities that permit corporal punishment.⁵⁸ While parents are recognized universally as the primary disciplinarians of their children, some members of Congress clearly believe that school officials should have no bearing on punishing their students.

Suspension of disruptive students does not appear to be a viable solution to discipline problems in schools. Some students may view suspension as a vacation rather than as a punishment, especially when parents do not devote personal attention to the punishment. When students do not care about learning, excusing them from school is not a logical solution. The student may fall behind in their studies during their absence, potentially increasing the likelihood that both their grades and their self-esteem will suffer and providing further incentive for continued deficient behavior.

Students who exhibit poor behavior adversely affect their classmates as well. In a recent survey of public school students, 70 percent of respondents believe their classes contain too many disruptive students, while 80 percent concede that they would learn more in class if the disruptive students were removed.⁵⁹ Proper rules of conduct, whether displayed in classrooms or explicitly described in student handbooks, should be made clear to each teacher, parent, and child who enters a school. Schools must maintain consistency when carrying out justice. Rather than “punish” a child by sending him home for a week, schools should make the punishment fit the crime. For example, if students skip a class, then they should be kept at school at the end of the day to do extra work in the class that they skipped. The next time they consider breaking a school rule, they may think more about the strict discipline that awaits them.

While it is necessary to discipline students who break rules, it is equally important to reward well-behaved children. One vital step in preventing bad behavior is applauding behavior that should be replicated throughout the classroom. For example, for preschool students, this conduct could mean distributing stickers to each day’s model students, or permitting them one extra cookie during snack time. Whatever the reward, different teachers have exercised numerous techniques over the years. The sharing of such information would certainly benefit both faculty and students.

Children should be disciplined when they do not follow rules and rewarded when they do. Schools must aim to prevent offenders from breaking school rules. Traditionally, school discipline has been administered in response to conventional misbehavior. However, the rising prevalence of drugs and guns in our schools may alter our view of dealing with troubled youths.

58. 142 Cong. Rec. H1137-05, Jan. 31, 1996.

59. *Education Bytes*, OUTLOOK, Winter 1998, at 3.

VI. SAFE AND DRUG-FREE SCHOOLS

Drugs and violence pose a pervasive threat to students in many of our nation's schools. A number of today's children encounter the sinister elements of drugs and violence in their neighborhoods and on television. Beyond a source of learning, today's schools regrettably are also a resting place for some of society's most dangerous elements. Schools must have the resources to combat drugs and violence efficiently and completely.

One cannot put a price on a child's potential that is lost to a drug addiction. Surveys conducted by the Parents Resource Institute for Drug Education (PRIDE) since 1982 have been used by thousands of U.S. school systems and several other countries.⁶⁰ Some of its recent findings point to the critical drug problem among American students:⁶¹

Percentage of Illicit Drug Use by 6th to 12th Graders

Use	1987-1988	1995-1996	%Change
Annual	18.6	29.5	+58.6
Monthly	10.6	18.3	+72.6
Weekly	6.6	12.5	+89.4
Daily	2.3	5.2	+126.1

Parents must be the primary role models for their children. Unfortunately, children are more likely to be warned about the dangers of drugs by their teachers (88.9 percent) than by their parents (29.6 percent).⁶² Among parents who are mute on the subject, 35.5 percent of their children have used an illicit drug during the past year.⁶³ However, among parents who spoke "a lot" to their kids about drugs, 25 percent fewer children used an illicit drug during the past year.⁶⁴ This evident gap supports schools' efforts to combat drug problems where parents' efforts fall appallingly short.

Schools should provide a sanctuary for children from drugs, guns, and other contraband that threaten their safety and well-being. Former Secretary of Education Lauro F. Cavazos released a handbook in 1989 entitled, "What

60. *Outline of Procedures Used to Obtain PRIDE National Summary Data*, PRIDE Surveys, 1998, at 1.

61. *Student Use of Most Drugs Reaches Highest Level in Nine Years*, National Summary Press Release, Sep. 25, 1996, at 1.

62. *Id.* at 2.

63. *Id.*

64. *Id.*

Works: Schools Without Drugs.”⁶⁵ One study in this publication reported that 57 percent of cocaine users purchased most of their non-alcoholic drugs at school.⁶⁶ One must wonder whether school officials should strengthen their surveillance techniques to the extreme of barring school doors shut before and after each day. As a result, schools would likely resemble minimum-security prisons.

In January of this year, the fourth largest school system in the country, Dade County, Florida, implemented a trial program of random drug testing of high school students.⁶⁷ While the constitutional ban on unreasonable searches has prevented other schools from advancing similar programs,⁶⁸ Dade County parents must give their consent to having their child tested.⁶⁹ This parent-school partnership is crucial to making gains in the battle against drugs.

At the federal level, the Federal Activities Program, authorized under the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act (SDFSCA), provides grants for the development of innovative anti-drug and anti-violence programs.⁷⁰ A 1995 study of 20 programs typical of the plans that are funded by SDFSCA revealed that drug use and violence declined as a result of these programs.⁷¹

In an effort to address crime on college campuses, Representative John J. Duncan (R-TN) introduced the Accuracy in Campus Crime Reporting Act of 1997 (H.R. 715).⁷² This bill would require higher education security departments to keep daily logs of assorted crimes. The information would be open to public inspection, thereby enhancing the community’s knowledge of campus security and supplying students with more complete information before choosing to attend a college or university.⁷³ This bill’s passage would benefit students by requiring school officials who receive crime reports to submit annual statistics to the U.S. Department of Education; open campus police logs and disciplinary boards to the public; and be penalized one percent of their federal funding for each infraction.⁷⁴

Children deserve to attend schools that are drug-free and safe. Our ability to achieve this goal would enrich learning opportunities and enhance the future of all students.

65. United States Department of Education, *What Works: Schools Without Drugs*, 1989.

66. *Id.* at 5

67. *Random Drug Testing Begins in Florida School District*, AM. SCH. BOARD J., Feb. 1998, at 8.

68. *Vernonia Sch. Dist. v. Acton*, 115 S. Ct 2386 (1995).

69. *Supra* note 69.

70. 20 U.S.C.A. § 7101 (1994).

71. GOP Record on Safe and Drug-Free Schools, House Democratic Policy Committee, 22 Apr. 1, 1997, at 1.

72. S. 715, 105th Cong., 1st Sess. (1997).

73. *Id.*

74. *Id.*

VII. COMPLETED CONSTRUCTION AND RESTORATION PROJECTS

Regrettably, some schools are facing their toughest challenge not within their walls, but with the walls themselves. As a result of decaying infrastructure, more than 60 percent of public elementary and secondary school facilities require major repairs.⁷⁵ Shortchanging our educational facilities results in shortchanging the students who learn there. In his FY99 budget, President Clinton proposed a \$5 billion, five-year initiative to provide tax credits on the interest for bonds that would be used to construct and renovate public schools.⁷⁶ In light of his 1996 request to invest \$5 billion in school construction projects,⁷⁷ the President is helping to raise public awareness of the deteriorating physical state of American schools.

However, the U.S. General Accounting Office estimates that approximately \$112 billion is needed to meet the needs of all schools' physical structures.⁷⁸ With the urgency that some of these schools face, in addition to the possibility of a 25 percent increase in school enrollment,⁷⁹ our education system may not be able to withstand additional years of delay. If members of Congress seek a greater mandate to inject solutions into this nationwide concern, then they need only visit schools in their district. I have done so in my district and have viewed with my own eyes the state of emergency facing some of our schools.

While decaying school buildings detract from the students' ability to learn, they also pose serious health risks. Two out of every three public elementary and secondary schools have "troublesome environmental conditions" such as asbestos, radon, or lead in the water.⁸⁰ If the education system is to improve, then students must learn in a healthy environment, where they can devote full attention to their studies and not be distracted by pollutants.

Recognizing the need for a solid school infrastructure, I have sought to appropriate funds to restore historic buildings at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) since 1993. On these campuses, historic buildings stand as reminders of each school's tradition and every student's identity. The unique needs of HBCUs stem from past racial injustices that barred African Americans from most opportunities for higher education.⁸¹ As a result, many colleges and universities exclusively devoted to educating African Americans were established. Notwithstanding the creation of land-grant colleges under

75. Boren, Susan, *School Facilities Infrastructure: Background and Funding*, Congressional Research Service, Nov. 2, 1995, at 1.

76. *Agency by Agency*, CONG. Q., Feb. 7, 1998., at 300.

77. Lawrence Hardy, *Covering Construction Costs*, AM. SCH. BOARD J., Oct. 1992, at 20.

78. Boren, *supra* note 36.

79. Dale Lestina, *President's Message*, GRASSROOTS, Sept. 1997, at 1, 2.

80. *14 million U.S. Children in Dilapidated Schools*, GRASSROOTS, Sept. 1997, at 1, 4.

81. 142 CONG. REC. H9973 (daily ed. Sept. 4, 1996) (statement of Rep. Clement).

the 1890 Second Morrill Act,⁸² federal and state governments failed to allocate sufficient land and financial resources to support these institutions.

I sponsored legislation during the 104th Congress, which became law at the close of 1996, that authorized \$29 million to restore historic buildings at HBCUs.⁸³ The money would reach certain HBCUs only when they raised matching donations on their own.⁸⁴ In this way, the incentive to solicit private donations is doubled, as this public-private partnership encourages a more expedient solution to schools' construction needs. Last year, Congress approved and the President signed into law the appropriation of more than \$4 million to historic buildings at HBCUs.⁸⁵ This year's presidential budget includes \$15.4 million for the project, and I will continue to work toward appropriating the rest of the authorized funds this year.

Children deserve to learn in structurally sound and climate-controlled facilities. We must renew our efforts to address the infrastructure needs of our schools.

VIII. PROMOTION OF CHARACTER-BUILDING INITIATIVES

Benjamin Franklin once stated that "Nothing is more important for the public wealth than to form and train youth in wisdom and virtue."⁸⁶ Character embodies core values such as trustworthiness, respect for self and others, responsibility, fairness, compassion, and citizenship. It is both a state of being and a state of doing. It is one of the most essential qualities of a well-rounded student.

Parents, of course, must have primary responsibility in developing character in their children, but schools should provide valuable reinforcement. Promoting character in the classroom is an essential part of any education. This does not mean that we should neglect basic schooling such as reading, writing, and arithmetic. On the contrary, I believe that developing character complements these skills, fostering a maturity that is essential in becoming an upstanding citizen. Good character not only contributes to one's own well-being, but also to the strength of our communities. It does not matter where you live or how you earn a living. We exhibit character in all that we do. And that is why the teaching of *good* values is vital to our nation's moral foundation.

Representative Tony P. Hall (D-OH) introduced the "Character Education Act of 1993" (H.R. 1952) during the 103rd Congress.⁸⁷ His measure contained

82. 7 U.S.C. § 321 (1890).

83. H.R. 4236, 104th Cong., 2nd Sess. § 507(d) (1996).

84. H.R. 4236, 104th Cong., 2nd Sess. § 507(c) (1996).

85. *Clinton Budget Holds Millions to Help Repair Black Colleges*, U.S.A. TODAY, Feb. 11, 1997.

86. See HONOR ROLL FOR CHARACTER-BUILDING COLLEGES: 1997-1998 (Christine Sweeney ed. 1997)

87. H.R. 1952, 103rd Cong., 1st Sess (1993).

two themes: offering character education grants out of the existing Secretary's Fund for Innovation in Education at the Department of Education; and calling for a detailed assessment of existing character education programs throughout local communities.⁸⁸ Unfortunately, this measure was not brought to the House floor for a vote. However, Congressman Hall and others have remained active on this issue, and I am encouraged to see that some of my colleagues are endorsing these activities in our nation's schools.

Last year, I introduced House Concurrent Resolution 127.⁸⁹ This measure calls on Congress to support and encourage character-building initiatives in all schools. It urges colleges and universities to actively involve themselves in character-building educational programs. Traditionally, colleges and universities were founded on the premise of developing intellectual minds and moral character. Today, colleges and universities continue to play a vital role in these areas. Some of these institutions have been applauded for their success in fostering high moral values. For example, the John Templeton Foundation has been a leading proponent on this issue since 1989, when it began sponsoring the "Honor Roll for Character-Building Colleges."⁹⁰ This publication highlights the colleges and universities that are most successful in promoting character on their campuses. Character development need not end during elementary school or high school. The cultivation of virtue is a lifelong pursuit. My resolution aims to applaud school initiatives that promote character, as well as to point out that higher education institutions are not above developing character in their students.

Children should graduate from school equipped with the strength of character needed not only to succeed in life, but to be good citizens. Fortunately, many people recognize the importance of this objective. A poll of New Yorkers found that 70 percent of whites, 88 percent of African Americans, and 89 percent of Hispanics view the teaching of "the common heritage and values that we share as Americans" as "very important."⁹¹ They understand that today's youth will shape our future. That is why we must not rest until all schools place proper focus on character. As Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education."⁹²

88. 139 Cong. Rec. E1115 (daily ed. May 3, 1993) (Statement of Rep Hall.).

89. H.R. Con. Res. 127, 105th Cong., 1st Sess (1997).

90. See *supra* note 86.

91. Amitai Etzioni, *How Not to Discuss Character Education*, PHI DELTA KAPPAN, Feb. 1998, at 448.

92. See *supra* note 86.

IX. CONCLUSION

History has been shaped by well-educated people who have been active participants in humankind's evolution. Space shuttle launches and heart transplants are not natural products of time. They are inventions of spirit and mind. When examining what has held our planet together and what strives to bring us closer, we need to begin our journey in the classroom. From this point, all roads of progress flourish.

Our continued ability to contribute to society's betterment depends on intelligence, good citizenship, and knowing right from wrong. Education brings these ideals into focus, cultivating in each of us the aspiration and aptitude to reach beyond our full potential. Education is a field where the stakes are as high as children can dream. After all, children are our nation's most precious resource, and our nation's success depends on our commitment to them.